

ADDRESS

By

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OF THE

U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



PRESENTED AT THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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MR. PRESIDENT, DIRECTOR-GENERAL NAKAJIMA, EXCELLENCIES,  
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

AS SURGEON GENERAL, I REGARD IT BOTH AS A PRIVILEGE AND A  
GREAT PERSONAL PLEASURE TO REPRESENT MY COUNTRY AT TODAY'S  
EVENTS HONORING THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

FOR MOST OF MY CAREER, I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN  
INTERNATIONAL HEALTH WORK. BUT IT HAS ONLY BEEN IN THE  
PAST EIGHT YEARS, DURING MY TENURE AS SURGEON GENERAL OF THE U.S.  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, THAT I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO  
WORK CLOSELY WITH THE LEADERSHIP AND STAFF OF THE  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

THE EXPERIENCE HAS REINFORCED MANY TIMES OVER MY BELIEF THAT W.H.O. IS NOT ONLY AN AGENCY WHOSE EXISTENCE IS ESSENTIAL TO WORLD HEALTH, BUT IS ALSO AN ORGANIZATION WHOSE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS HAVE EVEN EXCEEDED THE GREAT HOPES THAT ATTENDED ITS BIRTH.

W.H.O. WAS FOUNDED IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II, IN A TIME OF GREAT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL UPHEAVAL:

- \* THE HEALTH SYSTEMS OF MANY NATIONS WERE DEVASTATED OR NON-EXISTENT.

\* COMMUNICABLE DISEASES TOOK HEAVY TOLLS. SMALLPOX, TUBERCULOSIS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES WERE SO PREVALENT THAT FEW COUNTRIES WERE SPARED.

\* MANY MILLIONS OF INFANTS AND CHILDREN DIED EACH YEAR BEFORE THE AGE OF FIVE.

THE NEED FOR AN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH ORGANIZATION WAS APPALLINGLY EVIDENT.

AND, WE NOW KNOW THAT THE ORGANIZATION THAT EMERGED DURING THAT PERIOD HAS SURPASSED OUR GREATEST EXPECTATIONS. AND IT HAD A POWERFUL CONCEPT ... "THAT HEALTH, GOOD OR ILL, COULD NEVER AGAIN BE PURELY A NATIONAL PHENOMENON." THAT CONCEPT HAS STIMULATED AND GUIDED THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

THE HEALTH STATUS OF ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD -- WHETHER THEY LIVE IN DEVELOPED OR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES -- AFFECTS ALL OTHERS. IT WAS THEREFORE IN THE INTEREST OF ALL NATIONS TO WORK TOGETHER TO ADDRESS THE TOTALITY OF WORLD HEALTH PROBLEMS.

NO VEHICLE WAS BETTER SUITED TO THE TASK THAN W.H.O.

AS WE LOOK AT OUR WORLD TODAY, WE SEE THAT ENORMOUS PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN THE FOUR DECADES DURING WHICH W.H.O. EVOLVED FROM A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AGENCY, PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH COMMUNICABLE DISEASES CONTROL, TO A PARTNER OF ALL NATIONS IN THE SUPPORT OF NATIONAL GOALS FOR HEALTH FOR ALL.

- o WE HAVE IMPROVED OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS AND MADE HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE TO A DEGREE UNKNOWN 40 YEARS AGO.

- o WE HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN DEALING WITH COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, ESPECIALLY MALARIA, DIARRHEAL DISEASES, AND DISEASES THAT CAN BE PREVENTED BY VACCINATION.
- o LIFE EXPECTANCY HAS RISEN FROM A WORLDWIDE AVERAGE OF 41 YEARS IN 1950 TO 61 YEARS TODAY.
- o AND, WHILE FAR TOO MANY CHILDREN STILL DIE BEFORE THE AGE OF FIVE, THE WORLD IS CERTAINLY A SAFER PLACE FOR CHILDREN. THE NUMBER OF INFANTS AND CHILDREN WHO DIE BEFORE THE AGE OF FIVE IS MANY MILLIONS LESS TODAY THAN THE NUMBER WHO DIED DURING THE 1950'S, EVEN THOUGH THE TOTAL CHILD POPULATION IN THE WORLD HAS SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED.

WHILE THIS PROGRESS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MADE WITHOUT A GENUINE COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, THE LEADERSHIP, THE GUIDANCE, THE ASSISTANCE, AND THE INSPIRATION PROVIDED BY W.H.O. WERE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS IN OUR COLLECTIVE SUCCESS.

TODAY, THANKS TO A VERY ACTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL W.H.O. EXPANDED PROGRAM ON IMMUNIZATION, THERE IS EXCELLENT VACCINATION COVERAGE AGAINST POLIOMYELITIS, DIPHTHERIA, TETANUS, WHOOPING COUGH, MEASLES, AND TUBERCULOSIS.



AND, AT THE REQUEST OF MEMBER NATIONS, W.H.O. HAS NOW LAUNCHED A SPECIAL EFFORT TO ELIMINATE POLIO EVERYWHERE. POLIO MAY WELL BECOME THE SECOND DISEASE TO BE ERADICATED THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF MANKIND.

THE SUCCESS STORY OF THAT FIRST ERADICATION EFFORT, AGAINST SMALLPOX, HAS BEEN RECOUNTED MANY TIMES. AND, WHY NOT! THE HUMAN RACE HAD NEVER BEFORE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE SUCH A MEDICAL MIRACLE AS THE ELIMINATION OF A SPECIFIC DISEASE FROM OUR PLANET.

THE ERADICATION OF SMALLPOX UNDER W.H.O. LEADERSHIP WILL FOREVER REMAIN AS TESTIMONY TO THE KIND OF ACHIEVEMENTS THAT CAN BE REALIZED WHEN THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD WORK TOGETHER TOWARD A COMMON GOAL.

ORAL REHYDRATION THERAPY IS WELL ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING ANOTHER SUCCESS STORY. IT IS BECOMING SO EFFECTIVE THAT THE LIVES OF COUNTLESS INFANTS AND CHILDREN ARE BEING SPARED. THE THERAPY, OF COURSE, IS BASED ON A SIMPLE SOLUTION OF WATER, SUGAR, AND SALTS ... A FORMULA DEvised BY W.H.O. SCIENTISTS.

THE WORK ON MALARIA ALSO CONTINUES TO HOLD PROMISE THAT THIS DISEASE, TOO, WILL ONE DAY BE CONQUERED. FROM ITS CREATION, W.H.O. HAS TARGETED THIS DISEASE. AND DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES OF MALARIA CONTROL, WE CAN REMAIN OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE.

W.H.O.'S SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING IN TROPICAL DISEASES HAS ALREADY SHOWN THAT CONCERTED SCIENTIFIC EFFORTS CAN PRODUCE REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENTS IN DEVELOPING METHODS AND TOOLS FOR REDUCING OR ELIMINATING COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, INCLUDING MALARIA.

THE TROPICAL DISEASES RESEARCH PROGRAM UNIQUELY EXEMPLIFIES THE ACHIEVEMENTS THAT CAN COME ABOUT WHEN DIFFERENT GROUPS, EVEN THOSE WITH DIVERSE PHILOSOPHIES, JOIN HANDS AND WORK TOGETHER.

WITH URGING AND GUIDANCE FROM W.H.O., WE HAVE ALSO SEEN DRAMATIC CHANGES IN HEALTH MANPOWER UTILIZATION AND A COURAGEOUS REORIENTATION OF MEDICAL EDUCATION TOWARD PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, TO PROVIDE A MORE REALISTIC APPROACH TO THE HEALTH NEEDS OF LARGE POPULATIONS.

THESE SUCCESS STORIES ARE IMPRESSIVE. BUT IF ANYTHING, THEY SHOULD SERVE AS A STIMULUS TO US TO DO BETTER. THEY MUST NOT BE AN EXCUSE FOR COMPLACENCY.

WE KNOW ALL TOO WELL THAT VICTORY OVER DISEASE IS OFTEN COUNTER-BALANCED BY THE APPEARANCE OF NEW THREATS AND NEW DISEASES.

WE ARE NOW EXPERIENCING THIS WITH AIDS.

AIDS THREATENS EVERY NATION AND PRESENTS AN UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGE TO INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH. EACH COUNTRY AFFECTED THAT CONFRONTS THIS NEW HEALTH PROBLEM MAY DISCOVER IT MAY NEED TO RESPOND WITH RESOURCES OF SO GREAT A MAGNITUDE THAT IT CAN DEVASTATE THE VERY HEALTH SYSTEM IT IS TRYING TO STRENGTHEN.

THIS THREAT EXISTS FOR DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS ALIKE. BUT, AS I STATED A YEAR AGO AT THIS SAME PODIUM, AIDS IS POTENTIALLY MORE DESTRUCTIVE TO DEVELOPING NATIONS THAN TO THE DEVELOPED OR INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD.

AIDS TENDS TO IMPACT MOST OFTEN ON THE MOST PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY: THE BREADWINNERS IN THE PRIME OF THEIR LIVES. HENCE, DEVELOPING NATIONS HIT BY AIDS COULD LOSE AN IRREPLACEABLE GENERATION OF ENGINEERS, HEALTH WORKERS, TEACHERS, AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AS WELL AS WORKERS IN AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY, AND TRADE.

AIDS HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DEVASTATE A COUNTRY'S PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT.

A YEAR AGO, IN MY REMARKS HERE, I CALLED UPON W.H.O. AND THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD TO GIVE A HIGH PRIORITY TO MAKING THE WORLD'S BLOOD SUPPLY SAFE FOR TRANSFUSION. I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT BY WORKING TOGETHER WE MIGHT DO THIS BY 1991.

A SAFE BLOOD SUPPLY IS IMPORTANT EVERYWHERE. THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING. BUT IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD IT HAS PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE FOR TOURISM, BUSINESS, AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT.

OVER THE PAST YEAR, HIV SCREENING OF BLOOD DONORS HAS BEEN INITIATED IN MANY COUNTRIES. IN SOME COUNTRIES IT IS NOW MANDATORY. AND I UNDERSTAND THAT ALL AFRICAN COUNTRIES MAY BE ABLE TO DO COMPLETE HIV SCREENING OF BLOOD DONORS BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.



APPROPRIATE POLICIES TO INSURE SAFE BLOOD DONORS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN MOST COUNTRIES, AND THE NEED TO LIMIT TRANSFUSIONS TO THE NUMBER ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IS ANOTHER STRATEGY BEING PURSUED.

W.H.O. IS COORDINATING A GLOBAL BLOOD SUPPLY INITIATIVE SUPPORTED BY SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING W.H.O.'S GLOBAL PROGRAM ON AIDS AND THE W.H.O. LABORATORY TESTING UNIT, THE LEAGUE OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES, THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR BLOOD TRANSFUSION, AND THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

THESE BEGINNINGS MUST BE SUSTAINED AND SUPPORTED BY ALL MEMBER NATIONS.

BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES HAS THE LARGEST EXPERIENCE WITH AIDS, WE ARE ABLE TO SHARE OUR NATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHER NATIONS.

AIDS IS A RISK TO ALL SOCIETY AND NOT JUST TO ONE OR MORE NARROW GROUPS. AIDS IS STILL SPREADING IN THE UNITED STATES, BOTH GEOGRAPHICALLY AND NUMERICALLY AND WE MUST STILL CONSIDER IT A RISK TO ALL OF SOCIETY.

HENCE, IN 1987 THE UNITED STATES MOUNTED THE LARGEST MOST COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN IN THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO TELL THE PUBLIC THE FACTS ABOUT AIDS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO MEASURE THE BEHAVIORAL CHANGES THAT TAKE PLACE AFTER EDUCATION.

THE HOMOSEXUAL POPULATION HAS INDEED HEARD US, AND THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE CHANGED THEIR BEHAVIOR IS EVIDENCE BY THE DECLINE NOT ONLY IN OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AMONG HOMOSEXUAL MEN BUT IN THE ACTUAL DROP IN THE INCIDENCE OF NEW CASES OF AIDS AMONG THIS GROUP.

BUT WE ARE CONCERNED THAT ALL OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE AND UNDERSTAND THAT EDUCATIONAL MESSAGE AND THE CHALLENGE FOR US IS TO FIND INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE WAYS OF GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS SO THAT THESE YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT EXPERIENCE A DECADE OF SELF-DESTRUCTION.

THE GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST AIDS WILL TAKE MANY YEARS, AND IT WILL REQUIRE POLITICAL AND HEALTH LEADERS ALIKE TO HAVE THE STRENGTH OF COMMITMENT NECESSARY TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS, TO STAND FIRM AGAINST UNREASONABLE FEAR, AND TO MAINTAIN THE CONSISTENCY AND UNITY OF ACTION THAT ARE ABSOLUTELY VITAL FOR A GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST THIS GLOBAL THREAT.

NO COUNTRY CAN FIGHT AIDS ON ITS OWN. THE LEADERSHIP NECESSARY TO COORDINATE OUR EFFORTS CAN ONLY COME FROM THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. W.H.O. IS THE LINCHPIN HOLDING TOGETHER OUR INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS AND GUIDING THEM INTO A GENUINELY UNIFIED GLOBAL ATTACK ON AIDS.

I COMMEND W.H.O. FOR ITS EFFORTS AGAINST AIDS THUS FAR. I AM CONFIDENT THAT UNDER ITS NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL, DR. HIROSHI NAKAJIMA, W.H.O. WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE US WITH THE LEADERSHIP AND GUIDANCE THAT WILL SOME DAY BRING US VICTORY.

AFTER ALL, ONLY UNITED ACTION BY ALL COUNTRIES CAN BRING ABOUT REAL AND LASTING IMPROVEMENTS IN THE HEALTH OF ALL THE WORLD'S PEOPLE. AND THAT INCLUDES UNITED ACTION AGAINST AIDS, THE GREATEST POTENTIAL CATASTROPHE ON TODAY'S HORIZON OF HEALTH.

THANK YOU.

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